

WIC Food Package Costs: 2014

Client: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service

Overview

The Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) helps to safeguard the health of low-income, nutritionally at-risk women, infants, and children up to age 5. The program provides supplemental foods, nutrition education such as breastfeeding promotion and support, and referrals to health and other social services. The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) administers the program at the federal level, defining food packages by regulation to help ensure dietary quality and health eating habits.

In fiscal year 2014, the total federal expenditure for WIC was \$6.4 billion. Of that amount, \$4.3 billion was for food costs. Other costs were related to program administration and evaluation, the Farmers' Market Nutrition Program, special projects, and infrastructure. Although the State agencies provide monthly data on total food costs, participant food costs, and total rebates received, the information

is reported in aggregate. This study sought to estimate average per-participant food package costs by participant category and food package type and total food costs by WIC-eligible food category to estimate the effect of WIC on the market for WIC-eligible foods.

As part of this project, Insight—

- Obtained and analyzed household purchase data to identify likely WIC-eligible foods
- Collected data on WIC food expenditures and the costs of food packages
- Combined data from (1) FNS administrative data on WIC food expenditures, (2) WIC Participant and Program Characteristics data, and (3) household purchase data to estimate food package costs by participant category and food package type
- Analyzed the data on total food costs by WIC-eligible food category and estimated the effects of WIC on the market for WIC-eligible foods

Products

Final Report

Warner-Griffin, C., Kline, N., Wilcox-Cook, E., & Cole, N. (2018). *Fiscal year 2014 WIC food package costs report*. U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service, Office of Policy Support.

